



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

July 2009

Summer reading is such fun; we hope this column will offer some ideas for your leisure time! Come in and check out the always updated "Staff Favorites" and special exhibits for other suggestions.

'The Elegance of the Hedgehog' by Muriel Barbery was a bestseller in Europe and has been beautifully translated from the French. Set predominantly in an upper class apartment building on the Rue de Grenelle in Paris, the novel is a discourse on the meanings of life, art, beauty and other philosophical topics. The main characters are not necessarily the group you would expect to be thinking about these issues. A 12 year old girl, the middle aged concierge, her Portuguese housekeeper friend, and the Japanese man who moves into the building halfway through the novel comprise the major characters, with enough idiosyncratic neighbors to keep things lively. Secrets are revealed, relationships are formed and plenty of thoughtful dialogue takes place, making this a rewarding and different novel.

'The Scarecrow' by Michael Connelly acquaints us with Jack McEvoy from 'The Poet'. Hanging on to his career as a print reporter for the LA Times, McEvoy becomes immersed in a hunt for a killer who cleverly covers his tracks. McEvoy is a pretty hardened cynic who not only chases bad guys, but philosophizes intelligently about the newspaper business and its current difficulties. Harry Bosch makes a very brief appearance but it is Jack who is able to connect the dots and unmask a deadly murderer. Lots of twists make this an entertaining read. The author spent some time as a crime reporter before writing fiction and his knowledge of newspaper politics is spot on.

'The Signal' by Ron Carlson is beautifully written in that spare style so beloved of many of our Western writers. In the shadow of the beautiful and wild Wind River Range a young man on a journey through the wilderness struggles to make things right so he can hang on to the ranch and the woman that mean everything to him. He has made some mistakes in the past but you root for him to succeed as unprincipled adversaries draw close. The book has a strong sense of place, lots of tension, credibly drawn characters, and a brilliant plot trajectory. Recommended for Cormac McCarthy and Scott Smith fans.

'Farm City – The Education of an Urban Farmer' by Novella Carpenter is just terrific. She farms in a very rough part of Oakland, CA but manages to grow numerous crops, in addition to raising bees, turkeys, ducks, chickens, rabbits and pigs in a formerly abandoned lot. The child of back to the land "hippies", raised to appreciate home grown food, she transforms her neighborhood into a street where turkeys roosting on a slum rooftop are the norm. Novella is a really good writer and true farmer who doesn't flinch at slaughtering her animals for food. As you might expect her neighbors are an eclectic group, which adds to the fun. The scenes of dumpster diving in the Bay Area's finest restaurants in order to garner pig food are priceless.

'Border Songs' by Jim Lynch is an amazing novel full of unforgettable characters. It takes place on the Washington/British Columbia border where the local, mostly dairy farming citizenry, have to live with both an occasionally over enthusiastic border patrol and the constant movement of illicit material and illegal aliens.



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

The main character is Brandon Vanderkool, a six foot eight inch agent, who by virtue of having grown up on the border is more attuned than most to anything out of place. This makes him a crack agent in terms of busting smugglers but is an awkward fit on a young man who would rather be bird watching or creating art. This book is transporting in the best sense of the word.

'Awakening' by SJ Bolton is a creepy thriller set in the English countryside. The heroine is a disfigured vet who has to deal with an invasion of snakes and suitably chilling, murderous characters. Bolton is a skilled writer and makes the eerie events believable.

Reading 'The Sweet Life in Paris' by David Lebovitz is as good as a trip to this fabled city. The author moved there with three suitcases and the desire to start a new life in a place he had always wanted to live. It's chock full of delicious recipes and often hilarious accounts of what it is like to be an expatriate in this gorgeous but sometimes irritating place. Recommended for Francophiles and armchair travelers.

###